



Tuesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2004

## A Thumbnail Sketch of Your Grand Jury

By: The Superior Court of California, County of Inyo

### ***What is it?***

The Grand Jury system dates back as early as the year 1066 in England. In the mid-1600s, the first Grand Jury was formed in Massachusetts. Every County in California has a Grand Jury. These grand juries operate under the California Constitution Article I, Section B.

The purpose of the Grand Jury system today is to review both county government and civil matters. The Grand Jury may inquire into conduct of public officials in office. It may conduct audits; investigate the quality of education and welfare programs. The Grand Jury is the "watchdog" of county operations.

Your Grand Jury has the power to subpoena witnesses to appear and testify. The Grand Jury is not a trial jury and has no power to indict. It is strictly an investigative body. All proceedings, investigations and interviews by a Grand Jury are held in strict secrecy. The Grand Jury may seek legal advice from county counsel, the district attorney or the Superior Court judges.

### ***Who is it?***

Your Grand Jury is a panel of at least 11 persons who have volunteered a few hours of time each month. Each Grand Jury has a foreman to conduct the meetings, a foreman pro-term to fill in if the foreman is absent, a secretary and secretary pro-term. The presiding Superior Court judge selects the foreman each year. The members select any other chairs. Each person shares all the duties of each other. In other words, each person has an equal vote and no juror acts independently.

Any person may apply to serve as a Grand Juror who is a legal citizen of the United States and is 18 years or older. The person must have been a legal resident of the county for at least one year. The person must possess natural faculties, have ordinary intelligence, be of sound judgment and be of good character. Possession of a working knowledge of the English language is a must. The make-up of any Grand Jury may cross any economic or educational backgrounds. Formal education or wealth is not a factor in determining a Grand Jury panel. The ability to function as part of a group with open minds is the biggest asset. The time spent is a valuable and rewarding experience and furnishes insight into the workings of government and its officers.

As seen above, the Grand Jury is a body of people drawn together who have the best interest of their county and its residents. It is not a body to determine or administer. Its function is to investigate and report any misdeeds.

More information may be had by contacting:

The Superior Court of California, County of Inyo  
P.O. Box Drawer U  
Independence, CA 93526

Your Superior Court will be selecting the 2004-2005 Grand Jury soon. Write the above address for an application. Any juror serves for one year. It is truly an interesting and rewarding experience.

The Superior Court of California  
County of Inyo  
168 North Edwards  
Independence, CA 93526  
Tel 760-878-0218  
Fax 760-878-0433  
301 West Line Street  
Bishop, CA 93514  
Tel 760-872-4971  
Fax 760-872-1067  
[www.inyocourt.ca.gov](http://www.inyocourt.ca.gov)